

# CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS: IMAGE BUILDING STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES

### Colonel Md Hasan Uz Zaman, afwc, psc

"Healthy civil-military relations based on mutual respect and understanding is important for building a democratic society. While military provide a secure society free from external threats and internal enemies, the civil society provide the moral, financial and infrastructural support to the military so that it could carry out its assigned functions effectively and efficiently"

# -Air Commodore (Retd) Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, ndc, psc

#### INTRODUCTION

'Civil-military relations generally refer to the interactions between armed forces as institutions and the society they belong to' (Sobahan, 2012a:4). It is a very important aspect of a state which is significantly a sensitive one in the third world countries like Bangladesh. Civil Military Relations (CMR) is also an essential determinant of a country's national security and stability, and it remains as a condition for integrated war effort. Bangladesh was very lucky to have a flying start in respect of CMR since both civil and military fought shoulder to shoulder for the independence of their motherland in 1971. But unfortunately goodness periled very quickly and CMR faced tremendous challenges over the periods (Choudhury, 2011; AHQ Project Study:2011). Bangladesh Armed Forces is performing its constitutional role under political government and showed their credentials through nation building activities. There is a speculation that mutual respect, good understanding, trust as well as confidence between civil and military is yet to achieve desired level (AHQ Project Study, 2011; Khan, 2009).

There could be reasons for which CMR is still below the expectations. There is a strong perception that among all other reasons, lack of knowledge about each other and lack of adequate interactions between them are the two broad prime reasons for such relation. Military and civilians remains a distant from each other. They have less interaction and have less knowledge about each other's strengths, capability, weaknesses, working procedure etc. Lack of knowledge and interactions give rise to many misconception, false impression, confusion about each other. In many cases these profoundly obstruct harmonious joint environment and make CMR unhealthy. Considering the importance of a healthy CMR for sustainable development of Bangladesh, the reasons need to be addressed adequately.

In this backdrop, an attempt will be made in this paper to relate lack of knowledge and interactions with the CMR. Endeavour will be made to formulate strategies to raise the knowledge level about each other and create greater interactions opportunities between military and all stakeholders of CMR.

#### PRESENT CMR LEVEL IN BANGLADESH

#### **Concept of CMR**

'CMR means the relationship between the state and the military and between the society and the military' (Molnar, 2009:1). According to Peter Feaver, 'Civil-military relations encompass the entire range of relationships between the military and society at every level' (Peter, 1999:212). Samuel Huntington identifies 'civil military relations as one aspect of national security policy (Huntington, 1957:1)

#### The Stakeholders of CMR

CMR revolve around civilian and military. Its stakeholders in broad term are universal. In Bangladesh, major stakeholders are military, politicians, bureaucrats, civil society and intellectuals, mass populations, student's society and media.

# Importance of Civil Military Relations

To ensure national security of a country and to achieve an uninterrupted national development, a congenial CMR is very important. It also helps the Armed Forces to have an environment to contribute to the nation building activities. Dr. GowherRizvi,Adviser to the Hon'ble Prime Minister (PM) correctly pointed out 'The civil-military relationship serves as a fundamental basis for a functional and sustainable democracy' (Rizvi, 2011:2). A healthy CMR is utmost importance for war effort too. 'Strained civil-military relations are resulting in turf wars that prevent the military from working towards integrated warfare' (Jayal, 2014). Brig Gen Karim looked towards CMR in a very positive way 'Good civil- military relations have done miracles for the suffering teeming millions of Bangladesh whenever it dipped into crisis' (Karim, 2001:23).

Military is an important and inseparable part of national security. National security is not the lone responsibility of military vis-à-vis no national security system can be completed without military. 'A civil military relation is an essential determinant of a country's security and stability at home and the effectiveness of its military operations abroad' (Sobhan, 2012c:10). Unfortunately Bangladesh is yet to formulate national security strategy (BIISS, 2011:3). This is no denying fact that success in internal security duties, disaster management, election duties etc largely depend upon the degree of understanding and relationship that exists between the civil and the military personnel. 'Bangladesh Military not only preserves the sovereignty of the country but also forms an integral component of nation building, provides rewarding careers to young men and women and serves as a dependable force in times of national crises' (Sobhan, 2012a:4). The senior military officers also think such employment is going to work in favour of military and country as a whole. 'The military may be used in the nation building activities to replace the image of 'a non productive army' by 'a productive army' in



the mind of general mass, (Maj Gen Md Muzahid (retd), 2014, pers. comm., 27 April). Again, 'This blend of conventional and unconventional methods of warfare would greatly depend on good civil military relations' (Karim, 2001:22).

# **Tracing Back CMR Since 1971**

## **Negative Look of CMR**

The legendary start of Bangladesh's CMR turned bleak first after the killing of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and toppling his civilian government in August 1975 and the secondon March 1982 to dominate political regime. An "in aid to civil-administration" was used by all civilian and military governments since 1971 for maintaining public order and ensuring internal security. Some 'Domestic Peacekeeping' or 'Internal Security Duties' performed by military were debated too (Chowdhury, 2008:9; Sara and Dina, 2008:92). Few isolated incidents and involvement of military personnel working inside services and deputed organisations in unexpected affairs has put negative impression on CMR.

#### Positive Look of CMR

The first and foremost achievement of CMR is the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 where both civil and military fought together and brought freedom for the country. Armed Forces were raised through the war of liberation. Since independence, Bangladesh Armed Forces have increasingly involved in various forms of civil-military cooperation. This kind of civic action is not only promoting the efficiency of military in civil society but also bridging the gap in CMR.Bangladesh Armed Forces is the trusted saviour of disaster affected people in terms of rescue, medical support, distribution of relief and rehabilitations.

Preparation of National ID Card, Machine Readable Travel Document, Vulnerable Group Feeding card, low-cost housing scheme for the unprivileged, construction of roads, bridge, flyover, overpass, marine drive etc in Chittagong Hill Tracts and across the country are some of the glaring nation building projects executed by Bangladesh Armed Forces. In such engagement, Bangladesh Armed Forces are working hand in hand with different civilian counterparts. Military run and deputed academic institutions are contributing best for both civil and military students. Name of Bangladesh Armed Forces are highly pronounced in the arena of world peace keeping which has produced positive benefits for civil—military relations in the country. Institutional interactions and knowledge sharing programme undertaken by National Defence College (NDC), Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) and Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) etc in the form of course, training and guest speakers lectures are positive look out of CMR.

# Present CMR Level in Bangladesh - A Perception Survey

'Civil-military relationship has long been an important factor in the political, economic and social sectors of Bangladesh' (Amin, 2007). A survey was carried out to assess the contemporary CMR level through questions with five grade points among different stakeholders of CMR through paper-based and paperless mechanisms (online survey). Few senior military officers, civil bureaucrats, university teachers, intellectuals, police officers and media personnel were interviewed for finding in depth answers.

# An Analysis on Present CMR Survey Results

Overall survey result indicates that 11% of view present CMR level as good (very good and good), 46% as workable (average) and 43% below workable level. It means a large percentage of people are not satisfied with present level of CMR and it needs to be addressed.

The result should be an eye opener for both civil and military entities to work more on CMR in future. Brig Gen Shahedul Anam (retd) opined that 'CMR level is much more below than acknowledged publicly' (khan, 2009).

# A Critical Analysis of Factors on which CMR Depends

There are many factors on which CMR depends. Since it's a relation as such both civil and military entities contribute in maintaining the level of relation. But contribution may vary from one side to other. If reasons for strained relations are analyzed, it is found that most of reasons can be put under two broad categories ie. lack of knowledge about each other and lack of interactions between each other. Lindsay Cohn in his 'The Civil-Military Culture Gap Thesis' identified two gaps between civil and military, one of them is 'The notion of a connectivity gap, i.e., the lack of contact and understanding between them' (Lindsay, 2010). This was reiterated by Ex Principal Staff Officer (PSO), AFDin a seminar, 'The impediments to positive interactions between civil and military are 1) mutual knowledge gap between the two; 2) lack of professional and social interaction' (Wadud, 2011:3).

'Both civil and military should recognize their specific job before promoting effective relations between the two' (Simcock, 2011:2). National Security Strategy, Defence policy defines the relationship and jurisdiction of each other. There is a need for the existence of a clear legal and constitutional framework, defining the basic relationship between the state and armed forces as well as between the political and military establishments. This was also clearly emphasised by Mr M. Idris Ali MP, Ex Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Defence, Bangladesh, 'the absence of a defence policy in Bangladesh is the most important challenge to CMR' (BIISS, 2010a:6). Due to absence of defined strategy and policy, questions are raised specially on appointment and employment of military, new establishments and different purchases.



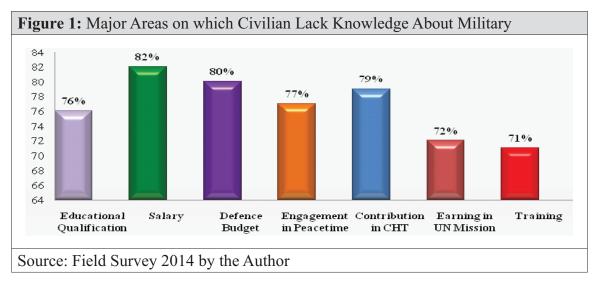
#### EFFECT OF KNOWLEDGE AND INTERACTIONS ON CMR

#### General

Interactions between civil and military and knowledge about each other have definite effect on CMR. Military and civilians have less interactions and less knowledge about each others strengths, capability, weaknesses, working procedure etc. Mr. John Hansen, Program Coordinatorof Defence Institution Reform Initiative (DIRI), USA in a workshop at Dhaka on 'Civil-Military Relations: Trust Building' stressed on 'developing formal and informal involvement between civil and military' in Bangladesh. He also stated that 'interagency cooperation would strengthen CMR' (Hansen, 2011:2).It is therefore imperative for both military and civil to have positive mindset to know and respect each other, and excel CMR through exchange of knowledge.

# Major Areas on which Civilians Lack Knowledge about Military

Civilians lack knowledge about military on certain aspects. Civilians also have some misconception about military. 'Civilian authority also needs better understanding on military chain of commands, working methods and accepting posture on why the military is involved in their affairs' (AHQ Project Study, 2012:34).



Major areas on which civilians lack knowledge are (figure 1) about educational qualifications, service privileges, defence budget and expenditure, role and engagement during peace time in cantonment (found from survey questions). They also have shallow knowledge about sacrifice and contribution in Chittagong Hill tracts, contributions to economy, UN peace keeping missions, training etc.

## Major Areas on which Military Lack Knowledge about Civilians

Military is not fully aware of his civilian counterpart too. Major areas on which military lack information about civilians are their ability, knowledge, expertise, jurisdiction, way of dealings, official bindings etc. Certain perception and preconceived ideas about civilians are also in vogue in military which hinder natural relation.

## Effect of Knowledge on CMR - A Perception Survey

A set of questions was served to both military and civilians to knoweffect of knowledge on CMR. Survey clearly shows knowledge about each other greatly affects CMR. About 95% civil and military personnel believe that knowledge about each other helps in better CMR and more than 80% also admits that their knowledge level about each other is average and below which indicates lack of knowledge is affecting present CMR level. It was encouraging to know most (more than 80%) of them are in favour of knowing more each other.

#### **Effect of Interactions on CMR**

The term "Interactions" in CMR means meeting each other with respect and honour. It could be official or unofficial, occasional, institutional level etc. Interactions remove barriers and bring one close to other. As a result, presence and requirement of one is felt by other and both can work harmoniously. Professor Dr Syed Anwar recommended for mutual understanding and interactions between civilian authorities and military and said 'for building a bridge of mutual trust both the civil and military need to interact with each other according to relevant democratic norms' (Husain, 2010:17). Lt Gen (retd) Smith reiterated the same, 'Good understanding and interactions between civilian authorities and the military are essential for a healthy democracy' (Smith, 2009:2).

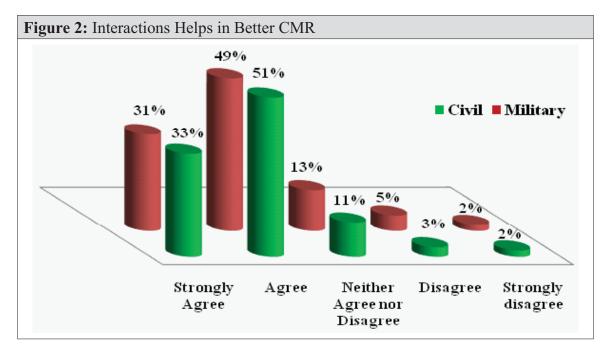
Interactions make fellow feelings and working environment better. Lack of interactions is likely to produce wild guesses and rigid stands about each other. Brig Gen Khan while mentioning weak areas of CMR said, 'another area that generally bedevils the civil- military relations is the perception, attitudinal or communication problem. There is a big communication barrier in understanding each other's ethos, values, objectives, culture, policies etc' (Khan, 1997:2).

# Effect of Enhanced Interactions on CMR - A Perception Survey

Perception, beliefs and attitude of both civil and military can be changed based on mutual trust and confidence through mutual interactions. As such Lt Gen Wadud opined for 'increasing interactions between the civil administration and the military forces' (Wadud, 2011:3). Interactions between civilian and military have significant effect on CMR. Greater interactions help in building a harmonious CMR whereas lack of interactions creates an uneasy environment. About 80% civil and military think that



lack of interactions adversely affects CMR and about 80% are also unhappy with present level of interactions and they advocated for more interactions.



# FORMULATION OF STRATEGY FOR BUILDING ENHANCED CMR IN FUTURE BASED ON KNOWLEDGE AND INTERACTIONS

#### General

Knowledge about each other and professional interactions between the military and civil society play a vital role in shaping up their relations. 'There is a need to educate the civilians and military together, so that they can understand each other better'. (Smith, 2009:2). Having found close ties with Knowledge and Interactions, and CMR, now correct strategies are to be formulated for enhanced CMR in future.

### **Knowledge Based Strategies for Enhanced CMR in Future**

Presently adequate scopes are not available for CMR study especially for civilians. A formal study will definitely make civilians much more knowledgeable and assertive. Participants in a high level workshop clearly denounced 'lack of civil-military education as one of the central challenges in trust building between civil and military' (BIISS, 2009a:3). Workshop, seminar etc are also emphasized for institutionalizing CMR education both in military and civil educational institutions. 'Thus specialization can increase the professionalism of the military and ensure a balanced civil military relationship' (Sobhan 2012b:4). A question was set in survey to know the activities by which knowledge level of military and civil about each other can be increased in future.

Conducting courses/training including seminar, symposium on defence matters for civilians in military institutions. More than 75% respondents opined for this option.

Inclusion of CMR teaching for students at university level, for civil professionals in their training institutions and scope for higher studies on Defence and Security related subjects is likely to make large number of CMR informed people in future. Among respondents 88% civilian and 90% military has faith on this strategy.

Training of military personnel on law, constitution, human rights, criminal procedure, media management etc in civil institutions. About 79% military think such training would enrich them to work better in aid to civil assistance duties.

Media is to be utilized to enhance CMR by wider coverage of military news, views, articles, videos, military might and pride, publishing books, journals, advertisements etc.

# Critical Analysis of Knowledge based Strategy of CMR

Table	1: Model-	Reflecting Knowl	ledge Based CMR Strategy on	a Life Span	
			Stages / Levels of Life		
S/N	Infant- School	College- University	Service/Employment	Retirement/Senior citizen/Active Life	
1		Ex	posure to CMR on Media		
2		CMR Learning			
3			CMR Training in Professional Institutions		
4			Exposure to Course/Training		
5			Exposure to Seminar, Sympos	sium	
6		Exposure to Pub	lications on CMR		
Sourc	ource: Prepared by Author based on Survey 2014				

From table-1 it is seen that a person have the exposure to the different types of knowledge based CMR strategy from infant to till his retirement/active life. Such formal or informal training or learning in different stages of life makes him/her conversant with the subject. It is also observed that he/she is likely to receive learning options most during his/her service/employment level although they are exposed more than one strategy at any stage of life.

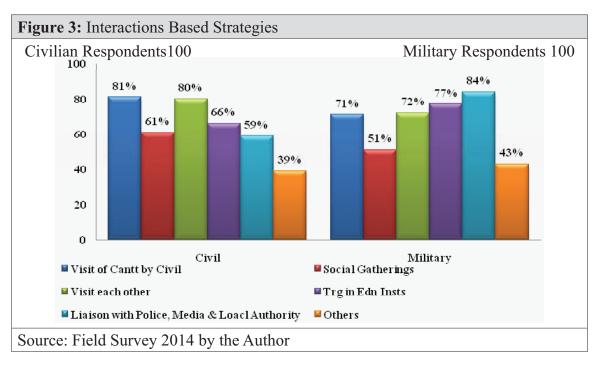
Implementations of Knowledge based strategies are likely to create more harmonious and healthy CMR in future. Such favorable environment is likely to project better image of Armed Forces among civilians. About 78% military and civilian has confidence on this. Establishing a CMR centre in Bangladesh will be very helpful in implementing



study, research and development work in future. Chairman, BIPSS, MajGeneral (retd) Munir in a personal conversation opined the same 'A centre like APCSS of USA in Bangladesh can be an excellent platform for CMR learning and teaching'.

#### **Interactions Based Strategies for Enhanced CMR in Future**

Suggestions were sought from respondents of survey on interactions based strategies to enhance CMR in future. Details of the survey are shown in figure 3 and suggested areas of improvements are described in subsequent paragraphs.



Visit of military installations by civil institutions and vice-versa. About 81% civilian and 65% military opted for the option.

Greater cultural and social gatherings among military and other stakeholders. About 61% civilian and 51% military trusted this.

Restructuring of ISPR, formulation of Armed Forces media policy and professional interactions with media. About 98% media personnel opined as such.

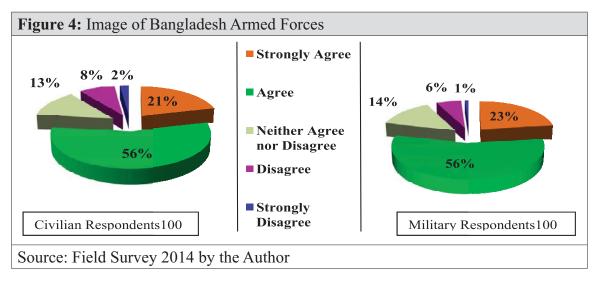
Critical Analysis of Interactions Based Strategy of CMR

Tab	le 2 : Model-Refl	lecting Interacti	ons Based CMR Strategy on	a Life Span
		St	ages/Levels of Life	
S	Infant-School	College- University	Service/Employment Life	Retirement/Senior citizen/Active Life
1	Visit of Militar	y Institutions b	y Civilians and Vice-versa	
2		Intera	ctions through Media includ	ing Internet
3			Visit CHT and	UN Msn
4			Cultural and Social Gathering	

From table-2, it is clear that interactions based CMR strategy covers the whole life of a person. He/She is most likely to interact during his/ her service/employment life and thatis the most required period. All these strategies can be enacted properly with the formulation of media friendly media policy for Bangladesh Armed Forces. 'There is a need for enhanced Defense Sector PublicRelations as a logical starting point for enhancing interactions' (BIISS, 2011:9).

# Effect of Enhanced CMR Strategy on Image of Bangladesh Armed Forces

It is expected that after implementation of knowledge and interactions based strategy a healthy CMR environment will exist in Bangladesh. A question was set to know what would be the predicted image of Bangladesh Armed Forces after implementation of strategies. The answer has little variations in case of civil and military. But most of participants answered in favour of the positive image.



About 77% responders think that image of Armed Forces will be better whereas 9% think otherwise and 14% remain indifferent.

# NDC JOURNAL Security Through Knowledge

Table	Table 3: Effectiveness of CMR Strategies on Major Stakeholders and Image Building of Bangladesh Armed Forces	ies on Major	Stakeholder	s and Imag	ge Buildi	ing of Banglade	esh Arr	ned Forces
			Ma	Major Stakeholders of CMR	olders of	CMR		Likely
S/N	Strategy Effectiveness	Politician	Bureaucrat	Students	Media	Civil society and Intellectuals	Mil	Contribution onImage Building
Ä.	KNOWLEDGE BASED STRATEGIES	TEGIES						
1	Training/Course/Seminar/ Symposium	>	7	7	>	~	>	7
7	CMR Education, Higher Studies on Defence			>		~	>	7
8	Media Management and Publications	>	~	7	>	~	>	7
4	Training in Civil and Military Training Institutions		7		>	~	>	7
B.	INTERACTIONS BASED STRATEGIES	ATEGIES						
5	Visit Each Others Installations/ Cantonment	l	Λ	7	^	$\nearrow$	>	~
9	Interactions through Media including Internet	>	7	7	^	7	>	^
7	Social and Cultural Gatherings	>	>	>	>	>	>	>
∞	Visit CHT and UN Missions/ Overseas Employment		~			~	>	~
6	Liaison with Police and Local Authority	>	7	I	I	~	>	7
Autho	Authority: Based on Authors Research and Recommended Strategies for Enhancement of CMR	and Recomm	nended Strate	gies for E	nhancen	nent of CMR.		

It is noteworthy that strategies recommended address all the major stakeholders of CMR and in great details (Table 3). Strategies recommended for CMR enhancement is likely to create conducive environment, harmonious and healthy relations between military and civilians which in turn is likely to create enhanced positive image of Bangladesh Armed Forces.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

After going in depth study of the subject following recommendations are put forward for enhanced CMR in future and these would build the image of the Bangladesh Armed Forces:

- a. Formulation of National Security Strategy and Defence Policy should be done with immediate effect which will clearly define the role of military and civilians. It should exactly dictate the role of Armed Forces and jurisdictions of civilian. AFD to pursue this matter through Ministry of Defence (MOD).
- b. A centre for CMR may be established under Dhaka University or BUP with both civil and military representatives which can act as pivot in educating both civil and military on CMR. It can deal with education, information and research on CMR. AFD may put forward the proposal to Ministry of Education through MOD.
- c. AFD to formulate a comprehensive CMR and Media policy for Bangladesh Armed Forces based on constitutional and legal framework. For this a committee may be formed taking the representatives from Ministry of Defenec, Establishment and Education, Armed Forces Division, DGFI, Judiciary and media.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The relationship between civilian authorities and the armed forces is important for political stability and national security of a country. This relation is termed as CMR. Bangladesh Armed Forces is acting constitutionally and showed their credentials through nation building activities. Employment of military in nation building activities worked in favour of creating harmonious CMR but deployment over a long period affects adversely. Survey results indicated that presently an average level CMR exists in Bangladesh which is not encouraging. Maximum 46% termed present CMR level as average and 42% below average. Maximum believed that absence of a written and approved national security strategy and defence policy adversely affects CMR.

Lack of interactions between civil and military, and lack of knowledge about each other are the two prime broad reasons affecting CMR in Bangladesh. These two broad factors have distinct impact on CMR. Unfortunately both military and civilian possessed inadequate knowledge about each other. Civilian lack knowledge about military's constitutional role, commitment, facilities, educational level, role in CHT, UN missions etc. On the other hand, military have insufficient knowledge about jurisdiction of civil



authority, their way of work, ability, expertise, official bindings etc. About 95% civil and military personnel believe that knowledge about each other helps in better CMR. Interactions between civilian and military also have significant effect on CMR. About 80% civil and military think that lack of interactions adversely affects CMR.

Knowledge and interactions based strategies are likely to pay dividend results in future CMR. Knowledge sharing by both civil and military intellectuals and experts is an effective strategy. Other knowledge based strategies include CMR training and learning, effective utilization of media by wider coverage of military news, views, articles, videos, military might and pride, publishing books, journals, advertisements etc. Among respondents 88% civilian and 90% military has faith on this strategy.

Interactions based strategy includes visit of military installations by civilians and vice versa. Greater cultural and social gatherings among each other are also considered as one of the prime strategies for better CMR. Restructuring of ISPR, formulation of media friendly Armed Forces media policy, CMR policy and professional interactions with media is going to create a harmonious relation between military and civilians. Establishment of a centre for CMR would help for education, training and research on CMR. It is expected that a positive image of the Bangladesh Armed Forces will be build after execution of strategies based on knowledge and interactions. About 78% military and 79% civilian has confidence on this.

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